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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3863  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1520  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 3574  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000014

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SUBJECT: BAROUD OUTLINES EFFORTS TO EXTEND STATE SOVEREIGNTY

Classified By: Ambassador Michelle J. Sison for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Lebanese government is committed to implementing UNSCR 1701, but Prime Minister Saad Hariri must establish a coordinated strategy for border control, Interior Minister Ziad Baroud told the Ambassador. His Internal Security Forces (ISF) had achieved initial successes in policing the Hizballah-controlled suburbs, and he had underscored to Hizballah that it could not "pick and choose" what the ISF did there, Baroud reported. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) had taken the lead in investigating a suspicious explosion in Hamas' Harat Hreik headquarters, but Hizballah had initially prevented security forces from securing the area, Baroud complained. The government was committed to policing the Palestinian camps despite Palestinian opposition, he emphasized, but the current vacuum in the government dialogue with the Palestinians had complicated his ministry's efforts. Even so, the INL-funded Nahr Al-Barid policing project might provide a model for the other 11 Palestinian camps, Baroud assessed.

12. (C) The Ministry of Interior (MOI) was technically ready to conduct municipal elections in May, Baroud asserted, but he conceded that some political parties sought to delay the elections. Baroud called for immediate cabinet action on necessary changes to the electoral code, and he welcomed U.S. technical assistance in the process. We will continue to press the PM to make border control a priority, and we will seek ways to support the expansion of ISF activities into Hizballah controlled areas. End Summary.

UNIFIED BORDER STRATEGY NEEDED  
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13. (C) The U.S. will continue to provide training and equipment to the LAF and ISF to bolster their ability to enforce UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, the Ambassador told Baroud on January 4. She added that the U.S. was willing to help prepare the Common Border Force (CBF) to secure Lebanon's borders. Baroud, who stressed that the government of Lebanon was fully committed to UNSCR 1701, flagged the urgent need for a unified GOL strategy for border control. The functions of the different agencies (Lebanese Armed Forces, Internal Security Forces, Customs, and Immigration) involved had not been clearly established, he complained, and he called on the PM to divide responsibilities. Baroud assessed that implementation could move quickly once a structure was defined and that resources would not be a problem. The MOI would not move forward on

the CBF until it received more clarity, he underscored.

#### ISF OPERATING IN SOUTH BEIRUT

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14. (C) Baroud touted the ISF's recent move into south Beirut and other Hizballah-controlled areas following an invitation from the party. When Hizballah approached him for ISF assistance to control the drug trade, car theft, prostitution and other criminality in south Beirut, Baroud said, he told them they could not pick and choose the limits of ISF authority. The ISF deployment in south Beirut had succeeded in reducing the number of car thefts and other crimes in the southern suburbs, Baroud asserted, although the areas were still under Hizballah control in other ways. Despite these limitations, he emphasized, the ISF was taking on more and more challenging tasks, with the eventual goal of expanding the ISF presence throughout Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty.

#### HARET HREIK EXPLOSION SHOWS ISF'S LIMITS

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15. (C) Hizballah initially prevented security forces from accessing the site of the murky December 26 explosion in Hamas' Haret Hreik headquarters that allegedly killed at least two Hamas security officials, Baroud admitted. Calling the situation "awkward and unacceptable," Baroud pointed out that the ministerial statement stipulated that Palestinian weapons should be confined to the refugee camps. Once Hizballah allowed government access to the site, Baroud clarified, the LAF took over the investigation since it takes the lead in terrorism investigations under an interagency agreement.

#### CHALLENGES POLICING PALESTINIAN CAMPS

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16. (C) Ambassador briefed Baroud on the INL community policing project in the Nahr el-Barid refugee camp and plans to build an ISF police station there. Baroud expressed his support for expanding the community policing concept to all of Lebanon, not just in the Palestinian camps. Although Baroud assessed that the Palestinians were not ready to accept Lebanese police stations in the camps, he claimed that Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) head Abbas Zaki agreed to allow their establishment. Dealing with Palestinian issues had been complicated, he admitted, by the confusion over who would head the portfolio. Current Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee Chairman Ambassador Khalil Makkawi was upset by rumors that Minister of State Wael Abu Faour would assume the portfolio, but Baroud predicted that the job would likely go to a Christian and not the Druze Abu Faour. (Note: We have heard that Makkawi stopped going to his office but continues to conduct meetings in his home. His top aide, Ziad El-Sayegh, resigned effective Dec. 31. End note.)

#### MOI READY FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

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17. (C) The MOI is technically ready to conduct municipal elections in May, Baroud asserted, even though some political parties feared that elections would jeopardize the "good feelings" following the government formation. Baroud rejected this view and said he supported timely municipal elections. Some changes to the electoral code were required before the election could take place, such as harmonizing the districts used in the parliamentary elections with those used in the municipal elections, he said. Baroud recommended that the cabinet immediately address these required reforms. In the meantime, he welcomed U.S. technical assistance and capacity building offered by the USAID and MEPI-funded International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

#### HUMAN RIGHTS DIVISION SET UP

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¶8. (C) Baroud announced the establishment of a human rights division in the MOI and said that he would soon name its head. The division, which he envisioned becoming an institution, would benefit from technical assistance and capacity building, he said. The Ambassador explained that the U.S. would welcome any such requests.

COMMENT

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¶9. (C) Baroud's remarks on the CBF suggest that it might not be a hot issue for the government; we will continue to raise it with the PM. His cautious but optimistic approach to expanding the ISF presence in Hizballah-controlled areas is a positive sign, and we will explore ways to institutionalize this presence via technical assistance for drug eradication in the Bekaa Valley and through other initiatives.

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